

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting  
Thursday, January 15, 2015, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair), Bernie McKinney, forest landowner (Vice Chair); Dick Ryon, North Bend resident; Rex Thompson, forester; Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Sandy Miller, forest landowner; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe; Matt Rourke, professional forester

Guests: Gil Bortleson; Amy LaBarge; Andy Chittock; Grady Steere, Hancock Forest Management

King County Staff: David Kimmett, Parks and Recreation Division; Randy Sandin, Department of Permitting and Environmental Review; Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

**Motions**

Motion 1- 0115 That the minutes of the September 11, 2014 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2- 0115 That the minutes of the November 13, 2014 meeting with corrections be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 3- 0115 That from this date going forward the election of officers shall be for a term of two years. The motion passed unanimously.

**Election of Officers**

*Election of officers for 2015-16* – Nate Veranth was elected to the position of Chair and Bernie McKinney to the position of Vice Chair. The at-large Executive Committee members will be Doug McClelland and Rex Thompson.

*Term of Office* – Nate opened discussion of whether to extend the terms of the Commission Chair and Vice Chair to two years from the current one-year terms. The proposal was introduced at the November 2014 meeting. Matt Roark moved and Sandy Miller seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Staff and Agency Reports and Announcements**

*Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)* – Doug McClelland reported on a number of topics related to recreation on DNR's 85,000 acres of forestland in King County.

The [Snoqualmie Corridor Recreation Plan](#) is nearly finished, Doug reported. He said that one hundred people came to a public meeting in Snoqualmie before the holidays. Doug said that the interest and involvement of the younger generation in the planning process has been telling. An emerging challenge in recreation is finding ways to accommodate diverse uses such as mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking, which need trails designed for those respective uses. It means that in the future DNR trails would be designed for a particular use, but available for other compatible uses, he said. This would be a change from the past practice that combined all uses. Some trails such as Mount Si and Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie would be reserved for hiking only, he said.

Doug said that DNR would develop a strategy for improving key access points to public lands used for recreation in the I-90 corridor. Some access points already work well for recreation but others need improvements in amenities such as parking, according to Doug.

Doug reported on other aspects of DNR's plans for recreation on state lands including a concept plan for trailhead and trail development on the Raging River and explained DNR's expansion of boundaries on the Mt. Si and Snoqualmie natural resource conservation areas.

*King Conservation District (KCD)* – Brandy Reed provided an update on the implementation of the KCD's new extended forest health program. The KCD has entered into a contract with WSU Extension to provide forestry education services. The WSU services would include forest stewardship coaching planning courses for King County residents and workshops. In addition, the KCD would hire a full-time forest health management technician to serve the owners of forested properties of less than 5 acres in size. The program objective would be to bring more acres into enhanced condition through forest stewardship, according to Brandy.

*King County Comprehensive Plan update* – Linda Vane provided an overview of the Comprehensive Plan Update process. Linda announced that the public review draft of the scope of work would be available for public comment from February 2 through 17. There was a discussion of the scope of work review process and the overall Comprehensive Plan Update. Randy Sandin observed that there have been times when code changes were needed in order to implement actions called for by County policies. He encouraged the Commission to consider contacting DPER directly when issues come up that are regulatory in nature and not a question of policy.

*Commission Administration* – Linda Vane reminded the commission that the annual financial disclosure process was underway.

#### **Update on soft surface trail permitting in King County**

Randy Sandin, Resource Product Line Manager, Dept. Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER)

Randy related background information, explaining that some years ago DPER wrote a programmatic permit template for soft surface trails for King County Parks and since then had used the template as the basis for a programmatic trail permit for a large timber company. DPER was currently in discussions with Washington State Parks and some private holdings for similar permits. Randy concluded that the programmatic template had worked very well for large private properties, those larger than 100 acres, and large public ownerships.

Randy said that since meeting with the Commission in September, DPER had been looking at how to apply that template to smaller ownerships. He explained that these properties could be classified as those with county-approved Forest Stewardship Plans, those covered by a conservation easement and other forested properties, respectively.

The Commission had asked DPER to look at ways to extend the programmatic permit concept to these smaller forested properties or even to create an exemption for soft surface trails that met a specific standard, said Randy. DPER had identified a number of obstacles that must be resolved in order to move forward, he explained. These include procedural questions and consistency with the County's stormwater management manual. A key issue, according to Randy, is that the Department of Ecology and traditional stormwater management are geared toward construction of buildings and paved surfaces in an urban setting. Resource land uses and the stormwater impacts of activities on large tracts of land can be quite different than those of traditional development in other settings, he said. DPER's goal was to take this into account and provide flexibility in determining when environmental review would be required by the stormwater manual. This would streamline the process for obtaining a permit. Randy explained that this issue was being resolved but would take time.

With that backdrop, said Randy, development of an exemption built into code is probably a couple years away. He proposed that DPER focus on refining the conditions in the existing template to apply to small properties. This would include some adjustments to the stormwater management elements, he said. To be eligible to use the template, regardless of property size, a landowner would have to have an approved Forest Stewardship Plan. Otherwise, the landowner would apply for the standard clearing and grading permit in order to build a trail, he said. Randy asked for the Commission's input on this approach. An extensive discussion ensued.

Doug McClelland thanked Randy for the work that DPER staff have put into this many-year effort.

### **Agriculture Commission Update**

Patrice Barrentine, Agriculture Commission Liaison, Water & Land Resources Division

Patrice provided a brief introduction to the King County Agriculture Commission, its history, primary areas of concern and membership. She said that the County Executives Local Food Initiative had created a lot of new interest in agriculture in the county in the past year. For fifty years, the extent of agricultural land in King County had been shrinking, she said. The County recently established an ambitious goal of increasing the extent of land in agricultural production by 400 acres a year for the next ten years, according to Patrice. There was an extensive discussion of the factors that affect farming and farm product marketing in the county.

The Commission discussed options for convening a joint meeting with the Agriculture Commission or perhaps participating in one of the other regional planning events as a means of sharing perspectives on resource land issues. Staff will research the options and report back to the Commission at a future meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on March 12, 2015, at the Preston Community Center.

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